

with relevant topics such as preaching in modern life, Islam and social problems, education, and insurance. However, we still consider that to discuss normative aspects of Islam is also important. Therefore, on this occasion we offer several discussions on hadith, exegesis, philosophy and Islamic thought. We do hope that the respectfully readers will take some benefit from the articles above. Hopefully. (Muhammad Wildan)

Socrates and Suhrawardī: Historical Affinities?

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ملخص

عاش سقراط في زمان يختلف عن زمان شهراواردي حيث عاش سقراط من عام ٤٦٩-٣٩ قبل الميلاد في حين عاش شهراواردي في حوالي عام ١١٩١ ميلادي.

والخلاف بينهما ليس في الوقت الذي عاشا فيه فقط وإنما يختلفان أيضا في المكان والثقافة والأفكار الأمر الذي أدى إلى الاختلاف في طريقة حياتهم وأفكارهم.

على الرغم من ذلك الاختلاف فإن بينهما تشابه حيث إن كليهما محاولات للكشف عن حقيقة الأشياء. كما أن حياة كليهما انتهت نهاية مأساوية.

فسقراط الذي لم يكتب شيئا معروف بمنهاجه الجدلي الذي يحاول به الاستعراض النقدي كما أنه الوسيلة التي يستخدمها للوصول إلى حقيقة الأشياء. والتي تختلف عن النظرة العامة في ذلك الوقت.

كما أن سقراط استخدم ذلك المنهج للحد من هيمنة رجال الدين والمجتمع الاثيني (اليوناني) الذي لم يكن يبالي بحقيقة الأشياء.

وبالتعريف عن الطريقة الاستقرائية يحاول سقراط الكشف عن الحقيقة عن الإله وعن العدالة وغيرها.

وأما شهراوادي فقد كان لديه نفس هدف سقراط ولكن
اختلف المنهج الذي استخدمه عن سقراط.
ويحاول هذا المقال الكشف عن سر الاختلاف المنهج بينهما في
الوصول إلى هدفهما المشترك.

Abstrak

Socrates (469-399 SM) dan Suhrawardī (m. 1191 M) hidup di dua dunia yang sangat berbeda, baik secara waktu, tempat, budaya maupun kepercayaan yang ada disekitar mereka. Perbedaan itu juga mempunyai konsekuensi pada perbedaan hidup dan pemikiran mereka. Walaupun demikian, anehnya, mereka mempunyai kesamaan. Kesamaan mereka adalah pada upaya mereka untuk menyingkap hakekat sesuatu. Sedangkan kesamaan yang lain adalah bahwa hidup mereka sama-sama berakhir secara tragis. Socrates yang tidak pernah menulis apapun, terkenal dengan metode dialektikanya. Dialektika Socrates, sebagai upaya investigasi kritis, adalah sarana untuk menjangkau hakekat sesuatu di luar kepercayaan umum saat itu. Dengan dialektika, Socrates berusaha untuk melawan hegemoni kaum agamawan dan masyarakat Athena saat itu yang acuh dengan kebenaran. Dengan mengenalkan penalaran induktif, Socrates mencoba menyingkap hakekat universal tentang Tuhan, tentang keadilan dll. Suhrawardī, di pihak lain, mempunyai tujuan yang sama dengan Socrates, tapi dengan metode yang berbeda. Misteri tentang perbedaan dalam kesamaan inilah yang akan disingkap dalam artikel ini.

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Socrates (b. ca. 469-d.399 BCE) and Suhrawardī (d. 587 / 1191) belong to two different worlds, separated by time, place, culture, and beliefs. It is difficult to believe that men whose personalities, lives and thoughts were so different can share something in common.

¹It would have been impossible to complete this article without a FCAR Postdoctoral Fellowship (Quebec Government) and a year of residency as Visiting Researcher at the University of Tehran, Department of Philosophy and the Institut Français de Recherche en

Athens certainly provided an "agora" for Socrates, while Suhrawardī resorted to the patronage of local rulers in Rūm and Shām. Socrates, who never wrote anything, was a man of the "dialogue" – the founder of the "art" of dialectical cross-examination, what has come to be known as the Socratic "maieutic."² Suhrawardī's "art" – if one may call it so – was, on the one hand, discursive (*baḥṭhiyya*) and, on the other hand, the result of mystical intuition (*dhawqiyya*). But Suhrawardī proposes no similar Socratic maieutic, unless one is willing to take into consideration some of Suhrawardī's short mystical and allegorical treatises, such as his *Rūzī bā Jamā'at-i Sūfiyān*,

Iran, IFRI. Special thanks go to Dr. Seyyed Musa Dibadj, organizer of the conference *Socrates, Philosopher of Dialogue* and to Prof. Emeritus Hermann Landolt for having generously provided us with a copy of his paper "Suhrawardī between Philosophy, Sufism and Ismailism: A Re-appraisal" which was read at Zanjan University for the International Congress on Suhrawardī, July/Aug. 2001 and which is forthcoming in *Daneshnameh* (Tehran, Iran).

²The man and his thought are known through the works of others, cf. primary sources: Plato, *Apology of Socrates* in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. by Benjamin Jawett, with *The Seventh Letter*, trans. J. Harward (1952), vol. 6 of *The Great Books of the Western World*, ed. in chief Robert McHenry (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1996), as well as the Criton, Phedon, Protagoras, Hippias, Phedre, and The Banquet; cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds*; cf. Xenophon, *Apology of Socrates* and *The Banquet*; cf. Diogene Laerce, *Life, Doctrines and Sentences of Illustrious Philosophers*, II; cf. studies: Olof Gigon, *Sokrates, sein Bild in dichtung und geschichte* (Bern: Francke, 1947); cf. N. Guiley, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (London: MacMillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968); cf. V. de Magalhães-Vilhena, *Le Problème de Socrate: le Socrate historique et le Socrate de Platon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952); cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Vol. III, *The Fifth Century Enlightenment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 325-507, and 417-507 for Socrates' philosophical significance.

³Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Idem, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 2, ed. and intro. by Henry Corbin (reprint of 1952; Téhéran: Académie Impériale Iranienne de Philosophie / Paris: Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve, 1397 / 1977), 9-260, esp. 3-4, 10.4-11.11 [Hereafter, OPM, II]; cf. *Sohrawardī, Le livre de la sagesse orientale. Kitāb Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq (with) Commentaires de Qotboddīn Shīrāzī et Mollā Ṣadrā*, trans. and notes Henry Corbin, ed. and intro. Christian Jambet (Paris: Verdier, 1986), 85-90 [Hereafter, Sagesse]. For a recent English translation, cf. Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination. A New Critical Edition of the Text of Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, with English trans., notes, comm. and intro. by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999); cf. Roxanne Marcotte, "Philosophical Reason Versus Mystical Intuition – Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191)," *Anaquel de estudios árabes* 7 (1996): 109-126; cf. Idem, "Métaphysique néoplatonicienne orientale et anthropologie philosophique (Avicenne et Suhrawardī)," in *Actes du XXVIIe Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française: la métaphysique, son histoire, critique, enjeux* (Québec, 18-22 août, 1998) (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval / Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2000), 79-86.

as types of "dialogical" investigation into the essence of reality.⁴

Socrates' mission was one of critical investigation, a means to uncover, beyond common beliefs, the essence of things. Reacting against the subterfuges of Sophists unconcerned with the truth, Socrates, according to Aristotle, introduced inductive reasoning to uncover universal essences of God, of justice, etc., by opposing particular examples and questioning common opinion.⁵ Suhrawardī's mission may present some parallel with Socrates' aim to uncover universal essences, but the means to achieve this goal were completely different, since the discursive is at the service of the intuitive. In spite of these differences, both remained enigmas: Socrates for Athenians and Suhrawardī for Aleppans.

So why are they so easily associated with one another? This may be because they both faced a tragic end. This has been the general interpretation of the rapprochement that is often made between Socrates and Suhrawardī.⁶ A closer look at the events that surrounded their accusations and trials is necessary to highlight some similarities: introduction of new ideas, conflict with the religions of Athens and Aleppo, and non-adherence to the officially recognized orthodoxy. They are perhaps brought together because Suhrawardī mentions Socrates by name and he gives him an important role to play in the history of the transmission of wisdom (*hikmah*). More importantly, it must be emphasized that Suhrawardī's understanding of Socrates' place and role in the history of philosophy actually represents another chapter in the history of the interpretation of Greek thought, just

⁴Suhrawardī, *Rūzī bā Jamā'at-i Sūfiyān*, in Idem, *Oeuvre philosophique et mystique*, vol. 3, ed. and intro. in Persian Seyyed Hossein Nasr, with French intro. Henry Corbin (reprint of 1970; Téhéran: Académie Impériale Iranienne de Philosophie / Paris: Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve, 1396 / 1977), 242-50 [hereafter, OPM, III]; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré. Quinze traités et récits mystiques*, trad. du persan et de l'arabe par Henry Corbin (Paris: Fayard, 1976), 267-77; cf. Idem, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises. A Parallel Persian-English Text*, ed. and trans. with an intro. by W. M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Pub., 1999), 33-42 [a reprint of Suhrawardī, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardī*, trans. W. M. Thackston (London: Octagon Press, 1982)]; cf. Hermann Landolt, "Suhrawardī's 'Tales of Initiation,'" Review Article, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987): 475-86.

⁵Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 6 and XIII, 4 and *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 3; T. Deman, *Le Témoignage d'Aristote sur Socrate* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1942).

⁶Christian Jambet in his introduction to Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 53; cf. John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients. Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 201.

as interesting and important as Nietzsche's or Heidegger's interpretations of Socrates.

The Sociopolitical Context of the Accusations and the Trials

The drama of Socrates' trial (in 399 BCE) comes to life in Plato's *Apology*.⁷ A recent study sheds new light on the legal, cultural, and historical contexts of Socrates' trial, refusing to view Socrates as merely ironical (and thus insolent towards the jurors) and inviting his own condemnation (thus indifferent to the legal outcome of the trial), since there were no supplication and no fearful humility that might have earned him the jurors' mercy.⁸

The sociopolitical context of Athens at the beginning of the 5th c. BCE certainly provides the stage on which Socrates' execution was played: the end of the Peloponnesian war, the bloody episode of the Thirty Tyrants, and the reestablishment of democracy. Although Socrates had served the city by participating in its numerous campaigns and as one of the Presidents of the Assembly at the time of the trial of the generals of the Arginusae Isles and courageously refused to put the illegal motion to the vote in spite of the fury of the multitude, he was still associated with Critias and Alcibiades, who had belonged to his circle of friends, but who also personified the misfortunes of Athens. It did not matter that he had defied the orders of the Thirty Tyrants when they tried to implicate him in their misdeeds.⁹ Was Socrates merely a scapegoat for these recent events, or was it his refusal to accept the common opinion and his desire to view everything under a critical light, even Athenian democracy, its egalitarianism and its electoral process based on lot, that brought upon him the wrath of prominent Athenians?

⁷For Socrates defense, cf. Plato, *Apology*, 17a-24b2, 24b3-30c1, 30c1-35d8; and for his peroration, 38c1-39d9; 39e1-40c3; 40c4-42a5. Plato's *Apology* (an early dialogue) was written before his trip to Syracuse (ca. 387) and during the first decade following Socrates' trial to which Plato was a witness (while Xenophon and Aristophanes were not), cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. IV, *Plato. The Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period* (1975; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 53-4.

⁸Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (1989; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), vii.

⁹Léon Robin, *La pensée grecque et les origines de l'esprit scientifique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), 178-93; cf. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1970; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 997-8 s.v. "Socrates."

Similar observations about the sociopolitical context of Aleppo between 1183 and 1191 offer some insight into Suhrawardī's tragic end. Aleppo had always resisted Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 589 / 1193) more strongly than any other city. Conquered in 579 / 1183, the same year Suhrawardī arrived,¹⁰ the city was still living under threat of further political unrest, at the hands of Nizārī Ismā'īlīs whose stronghold was Jabal Anṣāriyya (between Antioch and Hamāh), the region West of Aleppo. Although they were vassals of al-Malik al-Zāhir, Ismā'īlīs were not entirely submitted. Some attributed the fire that damaged Aleppo's Great Mosque in 563 / 1167-8 to the Ismā'īlīs.¹¹ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had also been the object of two assassination attempts (570 / 1174 and 572 / 1176) at their hands.¹² In 572 / 1176-7, they mounted a military expedition in the southwest of Aleppo; and in 575 / 1179-80, three years before Suhrawardī's arrival, Nizārī agents were sent to Aleppo where they set fire to several locations in the city's market place.¹³

The Shī'ī community of Aleppo constituted another cause for concern. The large Shī'ī population had strongly resisted the opening of the first Sunnī schools at the beginning of the century. Although Shī'īs were tolerated by Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (who ruled from 541 / 1146 to 572 / 1176), in an attempt to counter unorthodox beliefs, the latter greatly encouraged the revival of Sunnism by establishing at least three Shāfi'ī *madrasas*, a Ḥanbalite and a Malikite hospices (*zāwiya*) and a number of convents (*khānqāh* or *ribāṭ*).¹⁴ Less than nine years before Suhrawardī's arrival, Aleppo was the scene of sectarian riots between Sunnis and Shī'īs. By the time of Suhrawardī's stay in Aleppo, animosity between the two communities had apparently

¹⁰ M. C. Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin. The Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 173-200; R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols. The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1250* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1977), 25.

¹¹ Nikita Elisséeff, "Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn. Inventaire, notes archéologiques et bibliographiques," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 13 (1949-51): 5-43, esp. 14.

¹² Farhad Daftari, *The Ismā'īlīs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 399.

¹³ Anne-Marie Eddé, "Une grande famille de shafīites alépins, Les Banū al-'Agamī aux XIIe-XIIIe siècles," *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 62 (1991): 61-71, esp. 64.

¹⁴ Elisséeff, "Les monuments de Nūr al-Dīn," 5-6, 9-11, 13, 15; cf. H. A. R. Gibb, "The Career of Nūr al-Dīn," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K. M. Setton and M. W. Baldwin, 6 vols. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), vol. 1 [entitled the *First Hundred Years*], 513-27.

decreased. Al-Malik al-Zāhir's reign (after 582 / 1186) was marked by the distribution of patronage among all schools of jurisprudence, including the Imāmī Shī'ī,¹⁵ the establishment of a religious endowment on the newly completed Shī'ī Mashhad al-Ḥusayn and his intercession with the ruler of Āmid for the release of a Shī'ī genealogist.¹⁶ Seemingly Shī'ī connotations would not, therefore, have constituted a political or a social threat, since al-Malik al-Zāhir adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Shī'īs, a now tolerated minority.

Aleppo also possessed its own indigenous aristocracy. Predominantly Shāfi'ī and Ḥanafī, the ulemas of Aleppo held important political positions: they were judges, teachers, and Imams. This indigenous aristocracy was still negotiating its religious authority with the new Ayyūbid rulers who required their legitimizing acquiescence.¹⁷ In this case, the interests of the ruler and those of the leading Sunnī families merged.¹⁸ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's policy, however, favored Shāfi'īs through the removal from office of people who belonged to other schools of law. From then on, the grand *qādī* becomes a Shāfi'ī. Feeling threatened by these new Shāfi'ī nominations, the local Ḥanafī jurists' animosity may have increased against Suhrawardī who, at least officially, belonged to the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence and who may have benefited from this Ayyūbid policy.

Some have argued that Sufis – like Ḥallāj, 'Ayn al-Qudṣ al-Hamdānī or Suhrawardī – were always put to death for political reasons, rather than religious ones.¹⁹ Biographers do report Suhrawardī's mystical inclination,

¹⁵ David Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and His Work. Ibn al-'Adīm and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 131, 132, 148; cf. Sauvaget, "Halab," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (1970), 85a-90a, esp. 87a-b.

¹⁶ According to Ibn 'Adīm, cf. Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 132.

¹⁷ Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, The Martyr of Aleppo," *al-Qantara* 22.2 (2001): 395-419; cf. Anne-Marie Eddé, "Hérésie et pouvoir politique en Syrie au XIIe siècle: l'exécution d'al-Suhrawardī en 1191," in *La Religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne (chrétienté et islam). Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche "Histoire sociale et culturelle de l'Occident. XIIe-XIIIe siècle"*, de l'Université de Paris X-Nanterre et l'Institut universitaire de France (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993), *Extrait* (Rome: A. Vauchez, 1995), 235-44.

¹⁸ Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 123-4, 130.

¹⁹ Marshal G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins. The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā'īlīs Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton, 1955); cf. Carl Ernst, *Words of Extasy in Sufism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985).

his harsh ascetic practices, even his execution of wondrous deeds, and his association with mystics.²⁰ For Suhrawardī, spiritual exercises (*riyāḍa*) are means to access divine knowledge, even describing Sufi practices (audition and remembrance of God's names) in such works as *Saḥīr-i Sīmurgh* and *Hālat al-Tuḥūliyya*.²¹

Socrates did not share Suhrawardī's asceticism and Sufi inclinations, unless one is willing to consider Socrates' refusal to seek wealth and his refusal to receive money in return for his teaching (as was customary at the time) as indications of some sort of mystical inclination or detachment of worldly affairs. But, Socrates' detachment of worldly matter was probably more philosophical and intellectual than religious.²² Socrates' care of the soul should be viewed in this light.²³

Suhrawardī's Alleged Political Doctrine

Some have suggested that Suhrawardī's tragic end is not alien to his attempts to implement a "political doctrine" out of his "Illuminative" (*ishrāqī*) philosophy which he would "have taught" to many leaders of the region.²⁴

²⁰ Shahrāzūrī, *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ fī Tārīkh al-Hukamā' wa al-Falāsifah*, 2 vol., ed. Khūrshīd Aḥmad (Haydarābād, 1976), vol. 2, 125; cf. *Ibid.*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Abū Rayyān (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma'rifa al-Jāmi'a, 1414 / 1993), 605. Qutb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, son of a physician of Shīrāz who had been a disciple of Suhrawardī, later followed the teachings of two Sufi masters, one of them, Najīb al-Dīn Buzghush al-Shīrāzī had also been one of Suhrawardī's disciples, cf. the introduction of Sayyid M. Mishkāt in Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Durrat al-Tāj li-Ghurrat al-Dabbāj* (Tehran, 1317s. / 1939 - 1320 / 1942), vol. 1, J (jīm)-G (gāf) (21 pp.). At the time, Suhrawardī would have been merely in his mid-twenties; cf. John Walbridge, *The Science of Mystical Light, Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī and the Illuminationist Tradition in Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1992).

²¹ Suhrawardī, *Saḥīr-i Sīmurgh*, in OPM, III, 314-32, cf. *Idem*, *L'Archange empourpré*, 449-62; cf. *Idem*, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, 91-105; cf. Suhrawardī, *Hālat al-Tuḥūliyya*, in OPM, III, 252-66; cf. *Idem*, *L'Archange empourpré*, 392-406; cf. *Idem*, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, 91-105.

²² Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3, 467; cf. *Ibid.*, 467-73.

²³ Plato, *Apology*, 29d and 30a; cf. the asceticism associated with the life of the soul found in Plato's *Phaedo*.

²⁴ Hossein Ziai, "The Source and Nature of Authority: A Study of al-Suhrawardī's Illuminationist Political Doctrine," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muḥsin S. Mahdī*, ed. Charles E. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 294-334, 322 n.48; cf. *Idem*, "Al-Suhrawardī," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 9 (1997): 782a-784b, esp. 782a; cf. John Walbridge, "Politics, Plato's *Seventh Epistle*, and the Failure of Suhrawardī's Political Ambitions," in *Idem*, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 201-10.

History does not provide much clues, let alone proofs to support the claim that Suhrawardī was an "advisor" to a number of local leaders and to al-Malik al-Zāhir.²⁵ Suhrawardī did gravitate around the powerful. Seeking the favors of a patron or of his entourage was a common practice for scholars of the time. This often led to the dedication of works to local rulers. Suhrawardī was indeed requested to write a summary of the thoughts of the true sages for someone "deserving," most probably 'Imād al-Dīn Artuqid, the son of Qarā Arslān.²⁶ The *Partū-nāma* may have been written for Rukn al-Dīn Sulaymān Shah (who ruled between 592 / 1195 to 600 / 1203), the son of Qelej Arslān.²⁷ This certainly further incriminated Suhrawardī, since Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had recently fought against the Artuqids before their submission into vassaldom. Although this fact is far from a proof that Suhrawardī had any overt political activities, the question may certainly be raised as to why did someone who readily traveled to seek knowledge and live the life of a poor mystic persist in attending the various local courts and that of al-Malik al-Zāhir?²⁸

One must, however, concede that Suhrawardī's works do contain elements that can easily have political implications. Suhrawardī establishes an ideal hierarchy of leadership (*riyāsa* and *khalīfa*) of which the earth is never devoid. An Imam fills the position of leadership, both spiritual and political, and he possesses divine knowledge. Walbridge notes that Suhrawardī's project should not be viewed in light of Plato's idealistic politics of the Republic, but rather in terms of the Pythagorean and Neoplatonic notion of "divine men," that is, Suhrawardī's "divinized" (*muta'allih*) sage.²⁹ This sage receives divine guidance and ultimately becomes the leader of, or the "pole" (*qutb*) for the community, whether he is present or absent.³⁰

The notion of pole alludes to the spiritual brotherhood of Sufi leaders who are said to secretly rule the world. This notion of pole is also

²⁵ Ziai, "The Source and Nature of Authority," 338; cf. Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 208; cf. Marcotte, "Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl," 395-419; cf. Naṣr Allāh Pūrjavādī, "Shaykh-i Ishrāq va Ta'lif-i 'Alwāḥ-i 'Imādī," in *Nāmah-yi Iqbal*, ed. 'Alī Dāvād (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hürmand, 1377 / 1998), 1-11; cf. *Idem*, "Partū-nāmah va Tarjuma-yi Inḡilīsi-yi 'Ān," *Nashr-i Dānish*, 16.1 (1378 / 1999), 55-63.

²⁶ Suhrawardī, *Alwāḥ-i 'Imādī*, in *Idem*, OPM, III, 1, 110.12-111.1.

²⁷ Naṣr Allāh Pūrjavādī, "Partū-nāmah va Tarjuma-yi Inḡilīsi-yi 'Ān," in *Nashr-i Dānish* 16.1 (1379 / 1999): 50-63.

²⁸ Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 204-6.

²⁹ Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 209.

³⁰ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 5, 11.12-12.13; cf. *Idem*, *Sagesse*, 90-1.

often identified with the hidden Imam of the Shī'ī tradition and refers to his divine guardianship (*wilāya*).³¹ Moreover, Suhrawardī alludes to a "maintainer of the book" (*qā'im*), an idea that, again, refers to the Shī'ī Imams who are the maintainers of the revelation as the interpreters of the Qur'ān (as mentioned in many Shī'ī hadiths).³² Suhrawardī's divinely inspired Imam shares some aspects with Plato's idea of the philosopher-king and is reminiscent of Plato's attempt to reform Syracuse by instructing its tyrants rather than of Socrates' attempts at moral reformation of Athenians. The central aspect is here the divine and the connection the Imam is able to establish with the hidden world of light.

The story reported by Ibn Khallikān (d. 681 / 1282) should, perhaps, be interpreted in this light. Shaykh Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631 / 1233) reported that Suhrawardī, who at the time was in Aleppo, mentioned that "without doubt I will rule the earth" based on a dream in which he was drinking the water of the sea. Told that it might merely mean that he would attain fame through his knowledge, Suhrawardī rejected al-Āmidī's interpretation.³³ Did Suhrawardī really believe in his interpretation of the dream and attempt to counsel rulers in order to achieve his end and become the counselor of philosopher-kings? Or should one question the authenticity of this particular story written more than three quarters of a century later and of which there is no earlier report?

Moreover, the Ismā'īlī "Great Resurrection" that was to bring a truly pure spiritual Islam had recently been proclaimed at Alamut (560 / 1164).

³¹ Muḥammad 'Alī Abū Rayyān, *Uṣūl al-Falsafa al-Ishrāqīyya 'inda Shihāb al-Suhrawardī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjū al-Miṣriyya, 1959), 89-91. [Also to the Qarmatiyya, cf. *Ibid.*, 91].

³² For instance, in Kulaynī's *Uṣūl: Kitāb al-Hujjat*, identified by Henry Corbin, *En islam iranien*, 4 vols., - vol. 2 - *Sohrawardī et les platoniciens de Perse* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 23 n.22.

³³ Ibn Khallikān (d. 681 / 1282), *Wafāyāt al-A'yān wa Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān*, ed. Ihsān 'Abbas (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968), vol. 6, 272; cf. *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary (Wafāyāt al-A'yān)*, 4 vols., trans. Bn Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843), vol. 4, 156; quoted in Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 205. Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī was himself dismissed from the chair he held at the madrasa al-'Azīziyya by al-Malik al-Ashraf, the Ayyubid ruler of Damascus, for having taught philosophy and theology, having even been suspected of political treason, cf. Carl Brockelmann and Dominique Sourdel, "al-Āmidī," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (1960): 434b; cf. Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VII^e / XIII^e siècle. Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1988), 56

The ulamas of Aleppo and the Ayyūbid rulers may have suspected Suhrawardī of affiliation with these groups. In his *al-Mashārī' wa al-Muṭārāḥāt*, Suhrawardī alludes to a secret key, a sort of secret writing of which he only provides a sample and which, according to Corbin, strongly resembles the secret alphabet of the Ismā'īlīs.³⁴ Oddly enough, the ulamas of Aleppo did not, however, use this particular work against Suhrawardī during his trial. In addition, despite Suhrawardī's overt rejection of any transmigration of the soul, some of his statements on bodies (*barzakh*) are ambiguous and could support the opposite conclusion and thus echo an Ismā'īlī stance (e.g., al-Sijistānī).³⁵

Possible Ismā'īlī affinities must be counterbalanced by both the fact that no biographical work mention any association between Suhrawardī and the Bāṭinīs or Ismā'īlīs and, more important, the fact that Suhrawardī adopts stances that are in opposition to Ismā'īlī doctrines. Suhrawardī's appeal for independent judgment (*jithād*) is clearly in opposition to any Ismā'īlī doctrine of exclusive direct spiritual instruction (*ta'līm*) as proclaimed by Ḥasan-i Šabbāh. Suhrawardī's identification of the Necessary Being with the Light of lights is incompatible with Ismā'īlī negative (apophatic) theology. And finally, in his *Maqāmāt al-Sūfiyya*, Suhrawardī rejects beliefs he explicitly attributes to the Assassins.³⁶ The Assassins (*ḥashīshiyya*), the local Syrian epithet given to the followers of Nizārī branch of the Ismā'īlīs,³⁷ still presented a political threat for Šalāḥ al-Dīn. Any suspicion of secret leanings towards Shī'ism (interpreted as a Crypto-Shī'ism) raised the specter of conversion to Nizārī Ismā'īlism or Bāṭiniyya (Crypto-Ismā'īlism) during this period of social, political and religious unrest.³⁸ This threat may have weighed heavily in Šalāḥ al-Dīn's decision to have

³⁴ Suhrawardī, *al-Mashārī' wa al-Muṭārāḥāt*, in Suhrawardī, *Oeuvre philosophique et mystique*, vol. 1, ed. and intro. Henry Corbin (reprint of 1945; Téhéran: Académie Impériale Iranienne de Philosophie / Paris: Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve, 1396 / 1976), 193-506, esp. 194.12-195.2 [Hereafter, OPM, I]; cf. *Ibid.*, ¶ 225, 505.12-6; cf. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, v. 2, 21-2, 22 n.20; cf. Corbin's intro. to Suhrawardī, OPM, II, 27 n.58.

³⁵ Landolt, "Suhrawardī's 'Tales of Initiation,'" Review Article, 482b-485a. Orphics and Pythagoreans, it should be noted, also believed in transmigration of the soul.

³⁶ Suhrawardī, *Kalimat al-Taṣawwuf* [or *Maqāmāt al-Sūfiyya*], ed., intro., and notes Emile Maalouf (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1993), 60.1.

³⁷ The term was used in a polemical tract (*al-Hidāyat al-Āmiriyya*) issued by the Fātimid Caliph al-Āmir against his Nizārī opponents, cf. Bernard Lewis, "Ḥashīshiyya," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (1971), 267b-268b, esp. 267b and 268.

³⁸ Morray, An Ayyubid Notable and His Work, 149.

Suhrawardī executed.³⁹

The Religious Context – Orthodoxy, Official Religion, and Heresy (*zandaqa*)

Accusations against Socrates

The religious context provides further insight into similarities between Socrates' and Suhrawardī's tragic ends. Three good citizens denounced Socrates as an impious Athenian, an accusation that led to the belief that he was "areligious," perhaps on account of Aristophanes' portrayal of an atheist Socrates, and for which they demanded his death.⁴⁰ Three formal charges were laid against Socrates.⁴¹ The first charge was that he did not recognize the gods that the state recognized. Implicit in this accusation were charges of atheism (although no law against atheism appears to have existed), not for his orthopraxy but for his orthodoxy, having applied some of his critical method to conventional religious beliefs of the time. For instance, Socrates defines the standard of righteousness or justice as a moral standard that does not depend on the Gods and the accomplishment of what might please the Gods (in the sense of piety), since justice and righteousness are more general concepts than piety.⁴² It may be that Socrates believed that law and God (or Gods) could not come into conflict; he states that "I have been commanded to do this [i.e., practice philosophy] by the Gods, both by oracles, by dreams, and in every way in which divinity had ever commanded a man to do anything."⁴³ The first charge was thus construed as a violation of the law against impiety whose extension was vague.⁴⁴

The second charge was that Socrates introduced new deities. It too consisted in a vague accusation that has often been associated with his views regarding either the powers of nature (nature philosopher) or the *daimonion*

³⁹ Faridah Mu'takif, "Dawlat-i Mustafā'ī al-Shaykh-i Maqtūl," *Kayhān-i Farhangī* vol. 18, no. 178 (Aug. 2000), 9-11, esp. 11 [special issue on Suhrawardī].

⁴⁰ Plato accuses Aristophanes of being responsible for Socrates' death, cf. Plato, *Apology*, 18a-20e; cf. Plato, *Laws*, X, 888a-905d.

⁴¹ Plato, *Apology*, 24b9-c1. The charge was studied by the King-Archon at the preliminary hearing, charges that are also mentioned by Diogene Laertius and Xenophon.

⁴² Plato's *Euthyphro*, 12c-d.

⁴³ Plato, *Apology*, 31a8 and *Ibid.*, 33c4-7. Socrates highlights the moral significance of his mission following his own idea of justice, cf. Plato, *Apology*, 29d4-5.

⁴⁴ Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, 30-4; cf. Plato, *Euthydemus*, 12e2-3.

(according to Plato) to which he often alludes.⁴⁵ But no names are provided for the divinities (not gods) that Socrates is alleged to have introduced. In fact, the second charge depends on the first. For the prosecutor, Maletus (later executed for his role in the trial of Socrates), the only recognized Gods were those decreed by the state.⁴⁶ In fact, these two charges were never clearly formulated or pressed very hard.

The third charge was that he corrupted the youth, again, a vague charge for which Socrates even requested clarification from the prosecutor, Maletus who had no choice but to concede that it was related to Socrates teachings regarding the first two charges.⁴⁷ He was thus accused of having a subversive influence on the minds of young men, in spite of the fact that no witnesses were ever brought forth to substantiate this last accusation. His obedience to the Gods was, however, steadfast for they had sent him to the city for its good.⁴⁸ He was not doing it for personal reasons and denied that he was a teacher or that he was remunerated, but to no avail.

Perhaps, his association with men who had been most prominent in attacks on democracy in Athens could not be forgiven. Or, perhaps, the potential danger that critical thinking represented for the class of the rhetorician, the sophists, and the jurists could not be tolerated. In any case, it remains an open issue. This, however, would be where the religious and the political converge.

Accusations against Suhrawardī

The jurists of Aleppo succeed in bringing against Suhrawardī similar charges of irreligiosity which were to find their way into Ibn Shaddād's (d. 684 / 1285) biography of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as being the real cause of Suhrawardī's execution, namely, of "not recognizing the ordinances of Islamic laws, and of paying no regard to the doctrines of the faith."⁴⁹ No details are provided

⁴⁵ Plato, *Apology*, 31c7-d5.

⁴⁶ Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, 34-6. Maletus' (a poet) accusation was countersigned by Anytus (a politician) and Lycon (a rhetorician).

⁴⁷ Plato, *Apology*, 26b2-6; cf. Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, 36-7.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Apology*, 29c.

⁴⁹ Ibn Shaddād (Bahā' al-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Rāfi'), *Nawādir al-Sultāniyya wa al-Mahāsīn al-Yūsufiyya* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya lil-Ta'lif wal-Tarjuman, 1964), 10; cf. Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn; or, What Befell Sultan Yūsuf* (Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn). (1137-1193 A.D.), trans. Sir Charles W. Wilson, compared with the original Arabic and annotated by Conder (London: Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1897), 10-1; cf. Ibn Jawzī (d. 654 / 1256), *al-Muntazim fi Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam*.

of the true nature of the accusations laid against Suhrawardī, and there is no mention of any political activities or political reasons. The *Bustān al-Jāmi'* of 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, a work known to Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī and written only a few years after the tragic event, is the only work that contains, in some details, an account of the probable course of the trial:

And all the jurists gathered and had an assembly convened for him. Amongst all of his works, there was an exegetical work of the Qur'ān based on his own opinion (*ra'y*), a book which he entitled *al-Raḡm al-Qudṣī*, and another book which was said to belong to him, the *al-Alwāḥ al-'Imādiyya* that were used against him in the dispute. They did not know, however, what to say to him regarding jurisprudence (*'ilm al-uṣūl*). They said to him, 'You said in your works that God is able to create a Prophet, whereas this is impossible.' Then, he said to them, 'There is no limit to His divine foreordination. Isn't He the All-mighty? If He wills something, it cannot be impossible.' They said, 'Indeed.' He said, 'So, God is capable of all things.' They said, 'Except the creation of a Prophet, since it is impossible.' He said, 'So, is it impossible absolutely or not?' They said, 'You have indeed become an infidel (*kāfir*).' They then construed grounds [for his condemnation], because, on the whole, he was lacking in reason – though not in knowledge – and amongst [all the signs of his lack of reason] was that he called his [own] soul 'inspired by the world of Malakūt (*rūḥ al-mu'ayyad bil-malakūt*).'⁵⁰

In this passage, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī mentions four important elements. First, he notes that jurisprudence (*'ilm al-uṣūl*) was not used against Suhrawardī. Those who were accusing him were the ones whom he had surpassed in disputation upon his arrival in Aleppo (at the al-Halāwiyya madrasa). Having had wind of Suhrawardī's intellectual abilities, al-Malik al-Zāhir is said to have convened a gathering of jurists and theologians of all schools of jurisprudence in the citadel where, again, Suhrawardī gained the upper hand over the religious leaders of Aleppo with his proofs and logical demonstrations and for which al-Malik al-Zāhir took a liking to him.⁵¹ The ulamas knew very well that they were no match for him in this field.

Second, al-Iṣfahānī notes that three of Suhrawardī's works were used against him: a Qur'anic exegesis, a work entitled *al-Raḡm al-Qudṣī*, and his

⁵⁰ 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Bustān al-Jāmi' li-Jamā' Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. Claude Cahen, "Une chronique syrienne du VIe/XIIe siècle: le *Bustān al-Jāmi'*," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 7-8 (1937-38): 113-58, esp. 150-1.

⁵¹ Yāqūt (Ibn 'Abd Allah al-Hamawī), *Mu'jam al-Udabā' li-Yāqūt*, 20 vols., ed. Aḥmad Farīd Rifā'ī Bak (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'mūn, 1936-8), vol. 19, 314-20, esp. 315 [the Arabic translation is by Yahyā Ibn Khālid Ibn Barmak]; cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn al-Anbā' fi Tabaqāt al-A'libbā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1965), 644.

al-Alwāḥ al-'Imādiyya. The Qur'anic exegesis, mentioned in Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī's (fl. 680 / 1282) bibliography of Suhrawardī's works, is now lost. The two other works used against him do indeed carry the hallmark of highly suspicious non-Islamic traditions that could easily bring on charges of heretical beliefs (*zandaqa*). The accusation of holding heretical beliefs (and of heresy (*ilhād*) in some sources)⁵² is most revealing. A vague term, *zandaqa* could encompass any type of irreligiosity, but especially teachings associated with ancient pre-Islamic Iranian religions and teachings that minimized revelation and the prophetic role of Muḥammad.⁵³ Indeed, Suhrawardī is unconcerned with the "orthodoxy" of the source of divine knowledge. In his *Safīr-i Simurgh*, he has no qualms in reporting side-by-side sayings attributed to 'Umar and to 'Alī, regarding the possibility of vision of the divine. From 'Umar, he reports, "My heart has seen my Lord," and from 'Alī, he reports, "If the veil had been lifted, my certitude would not have been greater,"⁵⁴ although his biographers have all reported that he was a Shāfi'ī and, therefore, a Sunni.⁵⁵

More incriminating, however, is his appeal to the teachings of Ancient Iran. *al-Raḡm* (or *al-Raḡīm*) *al-Qudṣī* used against Suhrawardī may actually correspond to *al-Wāridāt wa al-Taḡdīsāt*. Although *al-Wāridāt wa al-Taḡdīsāt* includes numerous Qur'anic verses and explicitly professes unicity, this work does include numerous Zoroastrian (Gnostic and Neoplatonic) elements.⁵⁶ In these *al-Wāridāt*, one finds the God of gods

⁵² Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Abnā' al-Zamān*, 8 vols., ed. Iḥsān'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1977), vol. 6, 272 and 273; cf. Idem, *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical*, vol. 4, 156 and 158.

⁵³ Pouzet, *Damas au VIIe / XIIIe siècle*, 255-60.

⁵⁴ Suhrawardī, *Safīr-i Simurgh*, 4, 317.5-14.; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 452.

⁵⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Udabā' li-Yāqūt*, vol. 19, 314.; cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 6, 272; cf. Idem, *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 4, 156.

⁵⁶ Landolt, "Suhrawardī's 'Tales of Initiation,'" 481a-482b. Corbin, reading *al-Raḡīm al-Qudṣī*, also believes that this work may correspond to *al-Wāridāt*, cf. Corbin, "Prolegomenes," in Suhrawardī, OPM, I, VI n.9. Regarding what Corbin has called Suhrawardī's *Book of Hours*, cf. Suhrawardī, "Strophes liturgiques et offices divins (*Wāridāt wa Taḡdīsāt*). Extraits traduits de l'arabe," chap. in Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 473-512 (the translation, 48-98; cf. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, vol. 2, 126-40) which Thackston believes is still unpublished (!), cf. Suhrawardī, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises. A Parallel Persian-English Text*, ed. and trans. with into. by W. M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Pub., 1999), xiv; cf. the fragment entitled *Wajjah-yi 'Uliyā-yi Ilāhī*, ed. M. Mo'in in *Majallah-yi Amūzish va Parvarish* (Tehran, 1924); reprinted in Suhrawardī, *Siḥ Risālah az Shaykh-i Ishraq. al-Alwāḥ al-'Imādiyya. Kalimat al-Taṣawwuf*.

assimilated to Ohrmaz (Ahura Mazda of the Avesta), and the "divine spirit," i.e., Gabriel, assimilated to the Zoroastrian angel Serosh-light (Sraoshad of the Avesta). In addition, Suhrawardī includes a number of Zoroastrian arch-angels such as Bahman-light (Vohu-Mana of the Avesta) and Shahrivar (Xshathra Vairiya of the Avesta), the third of the Amahraspands.⁵⁷ The Zoroastrian stamp of these *al-Wāridāt* is further attested by the fact that they have become part of the liturgy of the Zoroastrians under the leadership of their grand priest Azar Kayvân who emigrated (from Shîrâz or its surroundings) to Moghul India in the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century.⁵⁸

Chapters 10 and 11 of *al-Alwâh al-Imâdiyya*, another work cited against Suhrawardī, appeal once more to ancient Iranian traditions. Suhrawardī describes Hurakhsh, the conqueror of darkness, the "face" of God on whose order he provides light and creates days. He is the "Light of light" in the world of bodies, parallel to the first being who is the "Light of light" in the world of intelligences and souls.⁵⁹ In addition, *al-Alwâh al-Imâdiyya* incorporates numerous themes from Firdawsī's *Shâh-nâma* and a number of pre-Islamic figures such as Goshtasp, Feredin, Afrâsiâb and the royal light of glory (*kayân khurra*)?⁶⁰

It should be noted that a century after Suhrawardī's death, the theme of a return to ancient Iran was taken up by one of his followers. A telling example is the symbolic return of the Mongol Yīl-Khân Abâqâ to Ancient Iran and the use of esoteric themes (taken from Firdawsī's *Shâh-nâma*) for the construction of his summer palace at what is today known as Takht-i Sulaymân. Yīl-Khân Abâqâ wanted to rebuild the palace of Kay Khusruw on the ancient Sassanid site of the sanctuary of Shîz in Âzarbâyyân (South of Marâgha) where newly crowned kings made their pilgrimage. This project

al-Lamahât, ed. with Persian intro. Najaf-Ghulī Habibi, Engl. preface Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Intishārât-i Anjuman-i Shāhanshāhi-yi Falsafah-yi Irân, 1397 / 1977), 18 n.1 (of the introduction).

⁵⁷ Suhrawardī, *al-Wāridāt wa al-Taqdīsāt*, in Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 487, 490.

⁵⁸ Corbin, *En islam iranien*, vol. 2, 355-7, 258; cf. Sayyid Muḥammad Kāzīm Imāmī, *Falsafah dar Irân-i Bāstān va Mabādī' Hikmat al-Isḥrāq va Alfār va Āthār va Tārīkhchah-yi Zindigāni-yi Suhrawardī* (Tehran: Sikkah, 1353 / 1974).

⁵⁹ Suhrawardī, *Alwâh-i Imâdiyya*, in Idem, OPM, III, 90-2, 182.2-184.11; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 108-10.

⁶⁰ Suhrawardī, *Alwâh-i Imâdiyya*, in Idem, OPM, III, 93-5, 184.12-188.4; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 110-3.

was instigated by none other than Quṭb al-Dīn (Mahmūd Ibn Mas'ūd) al-Shîrâzi, a commentator of Suhrawardī's *Hikmat al-Isḥrāq* (the commentary was finished in 694 / 1295).⁶¹

Appealing to traditions of ancient Iran, Suhrawardī's works exhibited dualistic tendencies. The whole idea of light, important in Gnostic circles, is central to Suhrawardī's light ontology. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 / 1328) noted that Suhrawardī's light ontology shared much with Zoroastrianism and that it was responsible for the charges of *zandaqa* that were brought against him.⁶² In his *Āwâz-i Par-i Gibrā'il*, Suhrawardī's two-winged angel may be interpreted as an allusion to "Gnostic dualism." Moreover, the two-winged angel may be associated with the two-faceted nature of the second emanation found in al-Sijistānī's (Ismā'īlī) universal soul, an idea that may have originated in Gnosticism.⁶³ Gnosticism may certainly be traced to parallel developments originating in Ancient Persia's religious traditions,⁶⁴ or to Hermetic (Egyptian) traditions that were introduced into the Islamic world.⁶⁵ Further Gnostic elements are found in Suhrawardī's conception of the human soul as the "guiding light" (*nūr mudabbir*), as opposed to the "tenebrous substance" (*jawhar ghâsiq*) of sublunary matter.⁶⁶ Human souls are to return to their place of origin: the realm of pure light. As such, Suhrawardī also shares much with someone like the Sufi Najm al-Dīn Kubrâ (d. 717 / 1221).⁶⁷

⁶¹ A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Le *Shâh-nâme*, la gnose soufie et le pouvoir mongol," *Journal Asiatique* 272.3-4 (1984), 249-337.

⁶² Henri Laoust, *Les schismes dans l'Islam. Introduction à une étude de la religion musulmane* (Paris: Payot, 1965), 231.

⁶³ Landolt, "Suhrawardī's 'Tales of Initiation,'" Review Article, 482b, 483a; cf. Rudolf Macuch, "Greek and Oriental Sources of Avicenna's and Suhrawardī's Theosophies," *Graeco-Arabica* 2 (1983): 9-22.

⁶⁴ Henry Corbin, *Les motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Suhrawardī, shaykh al-Isḥrāq* (ob. 587 / 1191), foreward M. Pouré-Davoud (Téhéran: Éditions du Courier, 1325 / 1946).

⁶⁵ Corbin, *En islam iranien*, v. 2, 24-6; cf. A. E. Affifi, "The Influence of Hermetic Literature on Moslem Thought," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13.4 (1951): 840-55.

⁶⁶ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Isḥrāq*, 109-11, 107.9-109.16 and Ibid, 129, 121.8-122.11 [Hereafter, OPM, II]; cf. Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 99-101 and 112-3.

⁶⁷ Landolt, "Suhrawardī's 'Tales of Initiation,'" Review Article, 481a; cf. Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, trans. N. Pierson (Boulder - London: Shambhala, 1978).

Third, al-Isfahānī reports the more incriminating accusation of claiming that prophecy was still possible, if it was something willed by God. Suhrawardī argued rationally about the orthodox claim that Muḥammad is the Seal of Prophecy. On the doctrinal level, however, the consequence of his answer was a rejection of the absolute character of Muḥammad's prophetic revelation. One should not forget that Suhrawardī believed that divine lights, to which all prophets had an access, remain accessible to those who truly engage in the pursuit of wisdom (intuitive knowledge).

The fourth and final accusation brought against Suhrawardī was that he described his soul as "inspired by the World of Malakūt." In a sense, he was accused of claiming to receive spiritual assistance (*ta'yīd*). This could easily have been, again, interpreted as an Ismā'īlī position that can be traced back to the works of such thinkers as Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. 417 / 1021) or Nāṣir Khrusraw (d. ca. 470 / 1077), the latter frequently referring to the *ahl-i ta'yīd*, a term by which the *da'wah* referred itself.⁶⁸

Of all these accusations, the second and the fourth appear to allude to Suhrawardī's conception of the universality of wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and to the possibility of accessing this divine knowledge through various means – whether prophetic or mystical. This would certainly have qualified Suhrawardī as a holder of heretical beliefs. Similarly, the third charge would place Suhrawardī outside the realm of strict orthodoxy. In short, Suhrawardī and Socrates thus share in common their unorthodox views with respect to the prevalent views of Athens and of Aleppo and the potential danger they represented for Athenians and Aleppans.

Two Tragic Ends

Once Socrates' death sentence was handed down, its execution was delayed on account of the religious calendar. During this period, Socrates refused to flee (following Criton's advice) and continued to hold gatherings with his friends.⁶⁹ Socrates' *daimonion*, as he himself states,⁷⁰ did not sound an "alarm" at the prospect of the tragic outcome of the trial. He resiliently concluded that his own death would not be an evil.⁷¹ Moreover, he believed that "it would be wrong to disobey God's commands through

⁶⁸ Landolt, "Suhrawardī's 'Tales of Initiation,' Review Article," 482b.

⁶⁹ Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Apology*, 40a3-c3.

⁷¹ Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, 237-57, esp. 238-41.

fear of death,"⁷² obeying willingly God, rather than the Athenians.⁷³ He continued to hold gatherings with his disciples and friends and, thirty days later, he drank the deadly hemlock.

It was similarly argued that Suhrawardī did not flee and seek refuge in a safer place, in spite of threats upon his life.⁷⁴ But was he in a position to flee? According to some accounts, he was sent to prison, after being accused of impiety by the ulamas, and before having his death sentence issued.⁷⁵ If this was the case, he would not have been able to escape the execution. Biographical accounts do not allude to any similar Socratic drama, where Suhrawardī would have willingly accepted his fate as a just end. In addition, reports on the events surrounding the exact nature of his death are highly contradictory. Shahrāzūrī notes that the real cause of his death is uncertain. Some sources report that he died deprived of food, that he starved himself to death, still others, that he was strangled, and others that he was killed with a sword or, more tragically, that he was thrown off the walls of the citadel and set on fire, even crucified, like Ḥallāj.⁷⁶

Socratic Prototype of the Sage

Throughout history, the most pervasive image of Socrates has been that of the prototype of the sage (*ḥakīm*).⁷⁷ This is certainly true of the

⁷² Plato, *Apology*, 28e.

⁷³ Plato, *Apology*, 29d.

⁷⁴ Christian Jambet in his introduction to Sohravardī, *Sagesse*, 53.

⁷⁵ Ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir al-Sultāniyya*, 10; cf. Idem, *'Saladin'; or, What Befell Sultan Yūsuf*, 10-1; cf. Ibn Abī Usaybi'a, *Uyūn*, 642.

⁷⁶ Marcotte, "Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl," 395-419; cf. Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrāzūrī, *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ*, eds. by Otto Spies and S. K. Khatad, in *Three Treatises on Mysticism by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935), vol. 1, 90-121, esp. 98; cf. Idem, *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā'* "Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ", ed. Abū Shuwirab (no place: Jam'iyyat al-Da'wa al-Islāmiyya, 1397 / 1988), 375-96, esp. 380; cf. the Persian trans. of Maqṣūd 'Alī Tabrizī, intro. Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-Pazhūh and Muḥammad Surūr Mawlā'ī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī va Farhangī, 1366 / 1987) 484-74, esp. 461. Another Persian translation, made by Diyā' al-Dīn Durī (Tehran, 1317 / 1938), is reported by Nasr, who used the latter for his study, cf. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages. Avicenna - Suhrawardī - Ibn 'Arabī* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1969), 56; cf. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol 19, 316; cf. Ibn Shaddād, *Nawādir*, 10; cf. Idem, *'Saladin'; or, What Befell Sultan Yūsuf*, 11; cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 6, 273; cf. Ibn Khallikān's, *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 4, 157-8.

⁷⁷ This image found its way into Stoicism, Skepticism, and the humanism of Cicero, before its introduction into Christendom (Ficin).

Arabo-Persian world whose knowledge of Socrates' thought was very fragmentary and mostly indirect.⁷⁸ There does not appear to have been any kind of familiarity with Plato's dialogues. As a consequence, Socratic maieutic is almost completely absent in Arabic and Persian sources. By the same token, Socrates' death was known only via quotations, perhaps mainly from treatises with Socrates' name that consisted of wise sayings, biographical stories, and excerpts from Plato's *Apology*. In the same fashion, Suhrawardī's knowledge of Socrates, as well as of Plato was, therefore, fragmentary and indirect.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the place and the role attributed to Socrates provide a glimpse into Suhrawardī's conception of the history of philosophy or, more accurately, of the history of illumination of divine lights. Although Plato appears more prominently in Suhrawardī's works (for which he even provides a quote⁸⁰) than Socrates, Suhrawardī's two-fold origin of the sources and transmitters of divine knowledge does include Socrates.

For Suhrawardī, individuals have, of all time, been inspired by the metaphysical world of light. The common denominator between all true sages is their ability to have direct vision (*mushāhada*) of divine lights. Suhrawardī mentions that these are the lights that Hermes and Plato contemplated,⁸¹ the "source of the light of glory" (*khurra*) which instructed Zarathoustra and Kay Khusraw, and to which even Empedocles alluded.⁸² Suhrawardī and his disciples, in fact, conceived of Greek and Persian sages in a distinctively Neoplatonic manner, such that Plato, Socrates and their predecessors were capable, like prophets, to access the divine world.⁸³ Mystical intuition is at the heart of their noble philosophy of light, resembling the Greek Pythagorean and Platonist traditions. Shahrazūrī notes that only a few sages contemplated these divine lights, among whom were those who preceded Aristotle (*Imām al-baḥth*) – including Socrates and Plato – and who pursued intuitive as well as discursive knowledge, a characteris-

⁷⁸ Ilai Alon, *Socrates in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden-Jerusalem: E. J. Brill, 1991); cf. Yves Marquet, "Socrate et les Ikhwān as-Safa," *Journal Asiatique* 286.2 (1998): 409-49.

⁷⁹ Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 88-90 and 96.

⁸⁰ Suhrawardī, *al-Talwīḥāt*, 86, 112.6-10.

⁸¹ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 165, 156.3-6; cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 150.

⁸² Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 166, 156.11-157.3; cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 151; cf. Idem, *Alwāḥ-i 'Imādiyya*, in OPM, III, 93, 185.14-187.9; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 111-2.

⁸³ Corbin notes that Illuminationists (*ishraqiyyūn*) were the best instructors of what he identifies as an "Islamic Hellenism," cf. Suhrawardī, *L'Archange empourpré*, 95.

tic that sets them apart from prophets and mystics.⁸⁴

Socrates, therefore, partakes in this spiritual lineage of sages that have, throughout history, accessed this world of light. Sages, like prophets, belong to all nations and all epochs, whether from the West (Greece, Mesopotamia, or Egypt) or the East (Persia or even Hind), or from the three prophetic traditions.⁸⁵ Suhrawardī can then bring together, side by side, Plato, Zarathoustra (Zoroaster), mystics and prophets. Moreover, Suhrawardī adduces a Qur'anic verse (Q., 7:159) to corroborate the fact that there exists "a community guided by the Truth" and which he associates with all ancient Persian rulers and sages (not the *majūs*) that were guided by these divine lights.⁸⁶ They were all capable of visions, similar to Plotinus' and Zarathoustra's ecstasy, Hermes' vision, or the Prophet's *mi'rāḥ*,⁸⁷ and similar to Suhrawardī's own vision of a Plotinian Aristotle that instructed him about the essence of knowledge.⁸⁸ Suhrawardī writes:

Most indications of prophets, and of the pillars of wisdom refer to these [lights]. Plato and those before him, like Socrates, and those who have preceded them like Hermes, Agathadaemon and Empedocles, have all had this vision. Most of them have explicitly declared that they have contemplated (*shāhada*) them in the world of light.⁸⁹

Suhrawardī's Socrates clearly partakes in this spiritual genealogy of prophets, sages, and mystics capable of contemplating the world of light. Illuminationists (*ishraqiyyūn*) such as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī (who even provides a quote from Socrates⁹⁰), or Wadūd al-

⁸⁴ Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, in OPM, II, 2-8; cf. "Préface" in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 77-84, esp. 80. Extracts are edited in Otto Spies, ed., *Three Treatises on Mysticism by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul*, 90-121; cf. Suhrawardī, *The philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises. A Parallel Persian-English Text*, ed., trans. and intro. W.M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Pub., 1999), ix-xiii.

⁸⁵ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 165, 156.3-6; cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 150.

⁸⁶ Suhrawardī, *Kalimat al-Sūfiyya*, 55, 117.12-5; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 170.

⁸⁷ Suhrawardī, *al-Talwīḥāt*, 86-7, 113.2-9; cf. Shahrazūrī's preface to his *Sharḥ-i Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 241 n.28 and 242 n.29.

⁸⁸ For a translation of the account found in Suhrawardī's *al-Talwīḥāt*, cf. "Appendix II. Suhrawardī's Dream of Aristotle," in Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 225-9; cf. the Plotinian vision found in the *Enneads*, IV, 8, 1.

⁸⁹ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 165, 156.3-5; cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 150.

⁹⁰ Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 238 n.9; cf. *Ibid.*, 242 n.31, 243 n.32, 253 n.48.

Tabrizī⁹¹ have all included Socrates among the sages who were inspired by the world of divine lights and, in a sense, have made him divine (*muta'allih*).

Philosophy of History – Transmission of “wisdom”

Suhrawardī's conception of history consists of the history of direct personal experiences of the world of divine lights.⁹² Revelational and mystical experiences of exceptional individuals in their quest for knowledge – wisdom (*ḥikma*) – become the yardsticks of humanity's progress. In the Islamic world, transmission of knowledge generally occurs genealogically, for instance, the model of mystical genealogies (master-disciple relationship), or orally, on the model of hadith literature. Suhrawardī appears to allude to a similar process in his understanding of the transmission of this divine knowledge for which mystical genealogies certainly provided a model, hence, the importance of mystics who are equally able to access the world of light such as Ḥallāj, described as one of the spiritual leaders or poles,⁹³ or Abū Yazīd Bastāmī and Sahl Tustarī (disciple of Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī)⁹⁴ and Junayd and Shibli.⁹⁵ In a similar fashion, Shahrāzūrī alludes to an oral transmission of knowledge that, again, does not differ significantly from the disciple-master relationship: Plato – the seal of sages (*khātim al-ḥikmat al-dhawqiyya*) – received this knowledge from Socrates, Socrates from Pythagoras, Pythagoras from Empedocles, and so on until Agathadaemon (i.e., Seth, the son of Adam) and Hermes (or the prophet

⁹¹Wadūd (Ibn Muḥammad) Tabrizī's commentary (finished in 930 / 1524) on Suhrawardī's *al-Awāḥ al-Imādiyya* brings together Ḥallāj, Socrates, Plato, al-Jawhārī (in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*) and 'Abd al-Qādir Gīlī's (account of Ḥallāj), cf. Corbin, *L'Archange empourpré*, 118-9 n.13 (ms. Rāgib, 853); cf. Suhrawardī, *Awāḥ-i Imādiyya*, in OPM, III, 26, 128.10-4; Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 102 and 118 n.13.

⁹²For Suhrawardī's account of Greek philosophy, cf. Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 27-35, esp. 30-1.

⁹³Suhrawardī, *Lughat-i Mūrān*, in OPM, III, 294-311, esp. 5, 297.1-3 and 18, 302, 1-4; cf. Idem, *Saḥīr-i Simurgh*, in OPM, III, 13, 328.6-9.

⁹⁴Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt* in OPM, I, 55, 70.1-74.8; Idem, *I'tiqād* in OPM, II, 7, 267.1-2; Idem, *Ḥālāt al-Tufūliyya*, in OPM, III, 9, 259.8-10; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 399; cf. Idem, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, 50; cf. Idem, *Risālat al-Abraj*, in OPM, III, 461-71, esp. 16, 465.17-8. A work attributed to Suhrawardī also contains references to these mystics, cf. Idem, *Bustān al-Qulūb*, 52, 370.9-12 and 60, 377.1-2.

⁹⁵Suhrawardī, *Partū-nāma*, in OPM, III, 2-81, esp. 87, 75.15-76.4; cf. Idem, *The Book of Radiance. A Parallel English-Persian Text*, ed. and trans. with an intro. by Hossein Ziai (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Pub., 1998), 79-80.

Idrīs).⁹⁶

History, however, is not unidirectional. Transmission of this knowledge was interrupted, such that only those who have access to the world of light can revive this divine knowledge. Suhrawardī writes: “It is their noble and illuminated wisdom, to which the spiritual experiences of Plato and his predecessors among the sages are also witness, and which we have brought to life again in our book called *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*.”⁹⁷ Among the predecessors of Plato, Socrates figures preeminently. Abū al-Barakat al-Baghdādī's (d. 547 / 1152) similar concept of history, found in his *al-Mu'tabar fi al-Ḥikma*, presents the history of philosophy in terms of its oral transmission.⁹⁸ With the appearance of the written text, in order to save this perennial and divine knowledge from extinction, these truths and realities were veiled behind obscure symbols. The teachings of these philosophers became distorted, corrupted, and their true meaning was eventually lost.⁹⁹

At about the time of al-Fārābī (d. 339 / 950), Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381 / 992) presented a similar concept of history as an oral transmission of knowledge characterized by its use of symbols. Al-ʿĀmirī portrayed a

⁹⁶Shahrāzūrī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 242-3 n.31 and 253 n.46 and n.48. For an attempt at classification of the western and eastern traditions, cf. Seyyid Hossein Nasr, “Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī,” in Idem, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, ed. Mehdi Amin Razavi (Richmond, UK: Curzon, Press, 1996), 125-153; cf. Suhrawardī's more complex intellectual genealogy in Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 29-31; cf. Shahrāzūrī's commentary in OPM, II, 301.18-20; cf. Suhrawardī, *al-Mu'tabarāt*, in OPM, I, 223, 502.13-503.6, where he mentions Plato.

⁹⁷Suhrawardī, *Kalimat al-Ṣūfiyya*, 55, 117.12-5; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 170; cf. Corbin, *Les Motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Suhrawardī*, 24; cf. Shahrāzūrī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 81-2; cf. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 2, 29.

⁹⁸Plato's use of symbols is reported in Shahrāzūrī's *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ*, ed. Aḥmad, vol. 1, 170; cf. Ibid., ed. Abū Rayyān, 90; cf. Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 90. Regarding Plato's unwritten doctrines, cf. J.N. Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) and Hans J. Kraemer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics: A Work on the Theory of the Principles and Unwritten Doctrines of Plato*, ed. and trans. John R. Catan (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

⁹⁹Abū al-Barakat al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Mu'tabar fi al-Ḥikma*, ed. Yalṭkaya Şerefeddin, 3 vols. (Haydarābād: Jam'iyyat Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1357 / 1938-9), vol. 1, 2.7-2.17; cf. Shlomo Pines, “Nouvelles études sur Awhad al-Zamān Abū'l-Barakat al-Baghdādī,” in Idem, *Studies in Abū'l-Barakat al-Baghdādī, Physics and Metaphysics* – vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines* (5 vols.) (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 96-108.

succession of philosophers that went back to the legendary Luqmān, who was succeeded by Empedocles (a student of Luqmān and / or David), then by Pythagoras (a student of Empedocles and Solomon, or Solomon's students in Egypt), then by Socrates (a student of Pythagoras) and, finally, by Plato who was influenced by both Socrates and Pythagoras.¹⁰⁰ The importance of the use of symbols in the history of the transmission of knowledge is equally important for Suhrawardī who writes that:

This science is the very intuition of the inspired and illuminated Plato, the guide and master of philosophy, and of those who came before him, up to Plato's time, including such mighty pillars of philosophy as Empedocles, Pythagoras, and others. The words of the Ancients are symbolic and not open to refutation.¹⁰¹

For Suhrawardī, intuitive knowledge – in part, inspirational and, at times, revelational – was only expressed symbolically, a position that could only be the cause of further suspicion for the ulemas of Aleppo.¹⁰²

Suhrawardī's account of the place and the role of Socrates in the history of "illumination" is not an accurate understanding of the history of Greek thought. It corresponds to a later Islamic reconstruction. Moreover, Suhrawardī's portrayal of Socrates appears to be at odds with Socrates' own claims. This may be illustrated by taking into consideration two aspects of Socrates' life: the Delphic oracle and Socrates' *daimonion*. At the Delphic sanctuary, the Pythia (priestess) informed Chaerephon that Socrates is the wisest of mortals.¹⁰³ Socrates interpreted the Delphic oracle as the sign of a divine mission for his life, deciding to pursue a life of virtue and

¹⁰⁰ For example, al-Āmirī's mention of Plato's use of symbols, cf. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Āmirī, *Kitāb al-Amad 'alā al-Abad* in Everett K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1988), 70; cf. Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 33-4.; cf. Ibn Juljul (d. 987), *Ṭabaqāt al-ʿAṭibbā' wa al-Ḥukamā'*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1955), 42-3. A similar account found its way into Ibn Khaldūn's work, cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), vol. 3, 114-5; cf. Idem, *Muqaddimat al-'Allama Ibn Khaldūn*, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Ilmiyya, 1978), 480.

¹⁰¹ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 4, 10.11-15; cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 88; cf. Idem, *al-Taiwihāt*, 86, 112.2-3.

¹⁰² Not only prophets, but also sages, cf. Shahrāzūrī's preface to his *Sharḥ Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 243 n.32.

¹⁰³ Plato, *Apology*, 21a; cf. Xenophon, *Apology*, 14.

to seek "to know thyself."¹⁰⁴ But what was the nature of the Delphic oracle? The oracle was certainly not an inspiration coming from the world of light that revealed the essence of true knowledge to Socrates in a fashion similar to Suhrawardī's Plotinian Aristotle. The oracle was communicated to his friend. As for the care of the self (of the soul), as an embodiment of the "know thyself" that became the focal point of Socrates teachings, it constituted the prerequisite for a good life and belonged, first and foremost, to the ethical, rather than the mystical, or even the religious realm.¹⁰⁵

The second aspect of Socrates' life is his *daimonion*, described as a sign that always acted as a divine monitor, a "voice from God" (most probably Apollo)¹⁰⁶ that consisted in an alarm that warned him against doing anything wrong. Although Socrates believed in different forms of divination, such as oracles and dreams,¹⁰⁷ some even requiring interpretations,¹⁰⁸ his *daimonion* was characterized by its "uninformativeness."¹⁰⁹ It did not instruct Socrates regarding the nature of knowledge and, once more, appears to be distinct from Suhrawardī's understanding of divine illumination. Suhrawardī's horizon was primarily metaphysical, while Socrates' metaphysical horizon appears to be characterized by an absence of illumination in the Suhrawardian sense. Socrates' metaphysical horizon is best understood in light of its ethical finality.

Suhrawardī's concept of history has repercussions on the doctrinal level. True knowledge about reality is achieved through either discursive (*baḥṭhiyya*) means (the approach of al-Fārābī (d. 339 / 950) and Avicenna (d. 429 / 1037)) or through intuitive means, what Suhrawardī regards as the "experiential" (*dhawqiyya*) and the "presential" (*ḥuqūqī*), the latter having priority over discursive means. Suhrawardī does not, however, limit

¹⁰⁴ Plato, *Apology*, 21b and *Ibid.*, 23 b.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *Apology*, 23b-29e; cf. *Ibid.*, 30d-e and 30a; cf. Plato, *First Alcibiades*.

¹⁰⁶ Socrates refers, at times, to Apollo, cf. Plato, *Apology*, 29d; sometimes, he appeal to gods, in the plural, cf. *Ibid.*, 41d; but he appears to have a bias for a supreme governor of the universe, perhaps a supreme spirit, cf. Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, 475-6. Guthrie prefers to consider Socrates as "guided by a simple religious faith," cf. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3, 483.

¹⁰⁷ Plato, *Apology*, 33c4-7.

¹⁰⁸ Plato, *Apology*, 21b3-7. And his respect of the Gods is translated into his own quest for the "fortunes of the good are not neglected by the Gods," cf. Plato, *Apology*, 41d.

¹⁰⁹ Plato, *Apology*, 21d5-6 and 22e1-5; Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial*, 237-57, esp. 245-56.

intuitive (inspirational) knowledge to prophets alone. The uneasiness of the ulamas' of Aleppo with some of Suhrawardī's statements found in *al-Wāridāt* and *al-Alwāḥ al-Imādiyya* is, therefore, quite understandable. In reviving the ancient wisdom of Illuminationists, both eastern and western, Suhrawardī distinguishes between a historical world and an ahistorical reality. This dual conception of history locates truth at the level of a trans-historical reality accessed by sages, mystics, and prophets of all times.¹¹⁰ Consequently, prophets who receive revelation are informed about realities that belong to the same world of light from which sages and mystics are informed. The difference between sages and mystics lies in the fact that sages, as opposed to Sufis, are able to apply discursive reason to their experiences, and to explain them.

One may add that Suhrawardī's conception of history is not entirely at odds with the prophetic tradition. Sages, mystics and prophets all have an access to the same source of light, such that sages, mystics and prophets cannot disagree about this divine reality. Only their language differs and, in a sense, conceals the truth. Shahrāzūrī notes that sages use symbols to convey their teachings in a fashion similar to prophets whose revelations are written in symbols (something to which even Avicenna alludes in a number of his works); likewise, the sages of Persia have established their teachings upon the symbols of light and darkness.¹¹¹ Shahrāzūrī explains that all sages, in fact, professed unicity (*tawḥīd*) of God,¹¹² echoing Suhrawardī's claim. In his *al-Alwāḥ al-Imādiyya*, Suhrawardī notes that ancient sages, such as Hurakhsh, professed unicity.¹¹³ The monotheism of Plato appears to have been a popular view. This view found its way into Shahrastānī's work. The latter even admitted not having had access to Plato's

¹¹⁰ Jambet's introduction to Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 59-60; cf. Henry Corbin, *En islam iranien*, vol. 2, 346; Corbin developed similar ideas of "ahistory" and denounced historicism (method and philosophy), cf. Roxanne Marcotte, "Phenomenology through the Eyes of an Iranologist: Henry Corbin (1903-1978)," *The Bulletin. The Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies* 14 (1995): 55-70, esp. 57-9.

¹¹¹ Shahrāzūrī, *Sharḥ Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 243 n.32 and 245 n.34.

¹¹² Shahrāzūrī, *Sharḥ Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, in Suhrawardī, *Sagesse*, 251 n.43.

¹¹³ He writes: "[Hurakhsh] is the sign of unicity (*tawḥīd*), because he is alone in his rank and he testifies of the unique. He is the supreme face of God in the language of the *ishrāq*," cf. Suhrawardī, *Alwāḥ-i Imādiyya*, in OPM, III, 92, 184.1-3; cf. Idem, *L'Archange empourpré*, 109.

works.¹¹⁴

On the whole, the real tragedy is that Athens and Aleppo were unable to welcome the "other" – the one who is and who thinks differently from the majority.¹¹⁵ The sociopolitical context, necessary to fully understand the events that led to their respective deaths, raises the issue of possible political reasons for Socrates' and Suhrawardī's condemnations and executions. But the religious aspect cannot be simply ignored. Both Socrates and Suhrawardī were accused of not conforming to the "official" religion or beliefs of the city. Athens and Aleppo were thus unable to absorb what they both considered foreign bodies. They rejected them in the most tragic fashion. Socrates, although obedient to the laws of the city, was rejected for his skeptical attitude toward common Athenian beliefs, accused of being a threat to Athens' official religion.¹¹⁶ Suhrawardī, although highly competent in Islamic jurisprudence, was accused of introducing unorthodox elements (Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism, Ismā'ilism, etc.) into his highly misunderstood philosophy of light.

One may perhaps view Socrates and Suhrawardī as martyrs of a more meaningful quest, that of a greater universality. Socrates sought to go beyond sophistry and common beliefs, where reason became the criterion. Suhrawardī sought to access the source of perennial wisdom, where intuitive knowledge became the criterion. Both, therefore, sought universality in the transcendental, but with different means. Socrates sought universality of our concepts (pure good, virtue, or happiness) with reason. Suhrawardī sought true (perennial) knowledge with direct mystical (intuitive) experience of the world of light – whether inspirational or revelational. The means may have differed, but the goal was identical, and so were the consequences. Both were judged as having threaded the path of unorthodoxy. The real questions that remain to be answered are the following: "How can the city truly accept the other once it defines itself in terms of its official beliefs? How can the city instate a real dialogue among all of its inhabitants?"

¹¹⁴ Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients*, 96.

¹¹⁵ Frank Griffel, "Toleration and Exclusion: al-Shāfi'ī and al-Ghazālī on the Treatment of Apostates," *Bulletin of the Society of Oriental and Asiatic Society*, 64.3 (2001): 339-54.

¹¹⁶ Robin, *La pensée grecque*, 191.

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